1

Of Nature and Eros: Deianeira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*

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Humanity has always measured its individual and finite experiences against nature's endless cycle of birth, maturity and death. The descriptive analogies between human physical appearance and the natural life cycle which pervade epic and lyric poetry can also be documented in Greek tragedy, where the playwrights exploited a diction and an imagery already embedded in the spectators' cultural consciousness and adapted them to various dramatic purposes. Some of the ways in which erotic experience is portrayed by the tragedians through the manipulation of archetypal nature images can be observed in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*. Conventional *topoi* of love poetry pervade the play and several passages show how those nature metaphors associated with erotic experience play a decisive rôle in the psychological characterization of the female protagonist.

Echoing Deianeira's opening monologue about her restless and unhappy existence (1–48),[1] the chorus reflect upon the linkage between cosmic order and human life. As the movement of the cosmos is one of eternal return, so is human life in constant flux (129–36):[2]

[1] Fear, unrest and unhappiness are characteristic of Deianeira's life, from her youth onwards: T. B. L. Webster, *Greek Poetry and Life: Essays Presented to G. Murray*[2] (New York 1967) 164–65; J. R. March, *The Creative Poet: Studies on the Treatment of Myths in Greek Poetry*, *BICS* Suppl. 49 (London 1987) 66–67; B. Heiden, *Tragic Rhetoric: An Interpretation of Sophocles' Trachiniae* (New York 1989) 21–30. The prologue constitutes the thematic key to the motifs developed in the course of the play: A. Martina, "Il prologo delle *Trachinie*," *Dioniso* 51 (1980) 48–79.

[2] The simile in *Trach.* 130–31 recalls Homer's description of the Bear in *Iliad* 18. 487–88: R. W. B. Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies* (Oxford 1980) 45, 48; O. Longo, *Commento linguistico alle Trachinie di Sofocle* (Padova 1968) 74. A similar sentiment is expressed elsewhere in Sophocles: *Ajax* 669–76 and *TrGF* IV fr. 871 Radt. On the connection between cosmic cycle and human mutability: J. Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (London 1962) 174–77. On time in tragedy: J. de Romilly, *Le temps dans la tragédie grecque* (Paris 1971).

> But grief and joy come circling to all, like the turning paths of the Bear among the stars. The shimmering night does not stay for men, nor does calamity, nor wealth, but swiftly they are gone, and to another man it comes to know joy and its loss.[3]

"Sophocles' universe is an interconnected whole in which nature, man and the gods indissolubly belong together. The divine order comprises the movements of the cosmos, the actions of the gods, and the fates of mortals ... Man is intercalated among the powers of nature, as one of their metamorphoses."[4] Love, therefore, is neither an absolute concept nor an abstraction in the *Trachiniae*, but, as a manifestation of the cosmic order and a by-product of time, it undergoes change, death and renewal. Deianeira perceives and articulates an interdependence between the natural cycles, the sequences of time and the different aspects of her emotional life,[5] the constant opposition between past and present stressing the contrast between youth and maturity, love and amatory disillusion.

Although Deianeira's fearful existence predates her marriage to Heracles, her passage from a presumably serene period to one of relentless worries is bound to her reaching nubile age when, still living in her father's house, she was wooed for the first time (6–9). As Richard Seaford admirably illustrated, the wedding constitutes one of the most fundamental transitions in the life of an individual and represents, especially for the bride, a transition marked by ambiguity. Marriage comprises negative and positive aspects: The girl's passing to a new life and a new family signifies isolation and separation from her friends and relatives, while, at the same time, tradition demands that she and her groom be praised and likened to gods during the wedding ceremony.[6]

[3] The translation is that of M. Jameson (*The Complete Greek Tragedies. Sophocles* II, ed. by D. Grene and R. Lattimore [Chicago 1957]). On the cyclical nature of human affairs, see M. Davies (ed.), *Sophocles. Trachiniae* (Oxford 1991) on lines 129 ff.

[4] Th. C. W. Oudemans and A. P. M. H. Lardinois, *Tragic Ambiguity: Anthropology, Philosophy and Sophocles' Antigone* (Leiden 1987) 201.

[5] Knowledge and time are intrinsically associated: P. E. Easterling (ed.), *Sophocles. Trachiniae* (Cambridge 1982) 3–4. Time is simultaneously a revealer, a teacher and a transformer: *TrGF* IV frr. 301 and 918 Radt, with A. C. Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles* (Cambridge 1917) ad loc. and W. B. Stanford, *Sophocles. Ajax* (London 1963) on 646–48. For an analysis of the element of time in the play, see de Romilly (above, note 2) 81–83 and C. Segal, "Sophocles' *Trachiniae*: Myth, Poetry, and Heroic Values," *YCS* 25 (1977) 99–158, esp. 106–08.

[6] "The Tragic Wedding," *JHS* 107 (1987) 106–30; J. Redfield, "Notes on the Greek Wedding," *Arethusa* 15 (1982) 188–91 emphasizes the similarities between the wedding and the funeral, both rites of passage involving a change of residence. Also A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago 1960) 3: "Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death"; cf. 123–24.

Deianeira reveals her own awareness of the ambiguity of the transition effected by marriage when she contrasts her worrisome life as a wife and mother (148–50) with the peaceful seclusion of youth which she once enjoyed (144–47):

τὸ γὰρ νεάζον ἐν τοιοῖσδε βόσκεται
χώροισιν αὐτοῦ, καί νιν οὐ θάλπος θεοῦ,
οὐδ' ὄμβρος, οὐδὲ πνευμάτων οὐδὲν κλονεῖ,
ἀλλ' ἡδοναῖς ἄμοχθον ἐξαίρει βίον.[7]

Deianeira implicitly compares unmarried young women to plants:[8] They grow up in a sheltered environment of their own—the paternal household—until they are mature; upon reaching maturity they are taken away (λάβῃ 149) and made to enter an alien household.[9] The natural setting of lines 144–47 conveys the image of a *locus amoenus*,[10] a place

[7] R. D. Dawe, *Studies in the Text of Sophocles* III (Leiden 1978) 80–81 finds these lines "utterly alien to their context," and deletes the passage from the text of the play in his edition of Sophocles (Leipzig 1979). The athetesis has been rejected by W. Bühler, *Zenobii Athoi Proverbia* IV (Göttingen 1982) 214–15; R. Seaford, "Wedding Ritual and Textual Criticism in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*," *Hermes* 114 (1986) 50–54; T. C. W. Stinton, "Heracles' Homecoming and Related Topics," *PLLS* 5 (1985) [1986] 412–16; H. Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, *Sophoclea: Studies on the Text of Sophocles* (Oxford 1990) 154–55; Davies (above, note 3) 90.

[8] Easterling (above, note 5) on 144–47 suggests that *Iliad* 18. 56–57 (Achilles compared to a young plant carefully tended) and *Odyssey* 6. 162–63 (Nausicaa likened to a palm shoot) may lie behind the Sophoclean image. On comparisons with the vegetal world: E. Irwin, "The Crocus and the Rose: A Study of the Interrelationship Between the Natural and the Divine World in Early Greek Poetry," *Greek Poetry and Philosophy: Studies in Honour of L. Woodbury*, ed. D. E. Gerber (Chico, CA 1984) esp. 148–49 and 151–52. For a further, implicit, comparison with young animals: Easterling ibidem. In line 530, the bride is a calf (cf. A. S. McDevitt, *Hermes* 110 [1982] 245–47). Cf. also Eur. *IA* 1083–88, where the chorus compare the sacrifice of Iphigenia to that of a pure calf (cf. H. P. Foley, "Marriage and Sacrifice in Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis*," *Arethusa* 15 [1982] 162–69) and Eur. *Hecuba* 205–06 and 526, where the heifer metaphor is used of Polyxena. For comparisons with animals or plants in wedding songs, see Seaford (previous note) 50–53, (above, note 6) 111–12, and *JHS* 108 (1988) 119 (on Bacchylides' eleventh ode). On the correlation between marriage and death: J. C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1910) 546–61; M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge 1974); L. M. Danforth, *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* (Princeton 1982).

[9] On possible Homeric echoes in the puzzling χώροισιν αὐτοῦ: F. Ferrari, *RIFC* 116 (1988) 167–68.

[10] This phrase, now conventionally taken as the literary term referring to a specific kind of landscape description, seems to have been first introduced by E. R. Curtius in his *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern 1948) 189–200. Treatments of the *locus amoenus* have been recently surveyed by H. Thesleff, "Man and *locus amoenus* in Early Greek Poetry," *Gnomosyne: Menschliches Denken und Handeln in der frühgriechischen Literatur: Festschrift W. Marg* (Munich 1981) 31 n. 2; M. Davies, "Symbolism and Imagery in the Poetry of Ibycus," *Hermes* 114 (1986) 400 n. 7 provides additional bibliography. Antecedents to the *Trachiniae* passage include the description of the Elysian fields in *Odyssey* 4. 566 (absence of snow, storms, rain), that of the two

traditionally well-shaded, well-watered and free from windy blasts. This bucolic setting is frequently used in archaic poetry, both epic and iambo-lyric, as conventional accompaniment to erotic situations, whether explicit or not. The presence of such symbolic imagery in the poetry of Archilochus, Sappho and Ibycus being widely acknowledged,[11] the instances recognized in iambic and lyric poetry have in turn guided the detection of precedents in Homeric poetry. For example, in *Odyssey* 5. 55–74 the scenery suggests a love-nest to which Odysseus refuses to yield,[12] and the *locus amoenus* depicted at the end of the same book also seems to prefigure a potential amatory situation. The secluded area where Odysseus rests upon his arrival in Phaeacia foreshadows the romantic tone of the meeting between the hero and Nausicaa (5. 475–80):

βῆ ῥ' ἴμεν εἰς ὕλην· τὴν δὲ σχεδὸν ὕδατος εὗρεν
ἐν περιφαινομένῳ· δοιοὺς δ' ἄρ' ὑπήλυθε θάμνους,
ἐξ ὁμόθεν πεφυῶτας· ὁ μὲν φυλίης, ὁ δ' ἐλαίης.
τοὺς μὲν ἄρ' οὔτ' ἀνέμων διάη μένος ὑγρὸν ἀέντων,
οὔτε ποτ' ἠέλιος φαέθων ἀκτῖσιν ἔβαλλεν,
οὔτ' ὄμβρος περάασκε διαμπερές.

Trachiniae 144–47 and *Odyssey* 5. 475–80 both emphasize the absence of sun, rain and wind. The passages present the individual dwelling in such an environment as being apart from the achieved eroticism associated with exuberant vegetation and water sources, but at the same time about to experience it, either because of age (the maidens of Trachis and, before them, Deianeira) or due to attending circumstances (Odysseus). A place protected from direct sun, pouring rain and gusty winds, however, is not necessarily a gloomy, airless and parched wasteland; rather, the sheltered environment suggested in both passages conjures up the image of a spot untouched by the potentially destructive effect of unmitigated exposure to the elements.[13]

The concomitant reference to a secluded place, absence of scorching sun, rain and wind storms calls to mind a place where virginity could come to an end. A sense of latent fertility pervades the passage.[14] First, θάλπος θεοῦ both contains a literal reference to the sun and conveys a metaphorical

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bushes in *Od.* 5. 478–80 (absence of wind, sun, rain), and that of Olympus in *Od.* 6. 43–44 (absence of winds, rain, snow): Easterling (above, note 5) on 144–47.

[11] Cf. J. M. Bremer, "The Meadow of Love and Two Passages in Euripides' *Hippolytus*," *Mnemosyne* 28 (1975) 268–79; J. Henderson, "The Cologne Epode and the Conventions of Early Greek Erotic Poetry," *Arethusa* 9 (1976) 163–64; E. S. Stigers, "Retreat from the Male: Catullus 62 and Sappho's Erotic Flowers," *Ramus* 6 (1977) 83–102; Davies (previous note) 399–402.

[12] So Bremer (previous note) 270.

[13] A. H. Sommerstein (*per litteras*) suggests that *Trach.* 144–47 rather describes the interior of a house, the expected dwelling of a παρθένος, as in Hes. *Op.* 519–23.

[14] See A. Motte, *Prairies et jardins de la Grèce antique* (Brussels 1973) 10, 14, 126, 206, 214, 222 (fertilizing breezes), 217–22 (water), and 10, 70–75 (sun).

allusion to the emotional "heat of desire."[15] As the warmth of the sun helps the plant to grow and ripen, so does the passion of love transform the maiden into a potential lover, ripe for marriage and sexual life.[16] Second, the presumably moderate and benevolent moisture which visits the garden of youth recalls the fertilizing power of rain on earth[17] and, ultimately, the archetypal union of sky and earth.[18] Third, the absence of turbulent winds does not make the presence of gentle breezes impossible, and in a passage tinged with the images of idealized virginal existence common in hymeneal poetry, πνεύματα (146) contains a likely allusion to the positive and benevolent action ascribed to breezes in similar and related contexts.[19]

The climatological metaphor expressed in lines 144–47 through θάλπος, κλονεῖν and πνεύματα[20] also introduces the notion of change and

[15] Later, Deianeira learns that Heracles is "warmed by desire" for Iole (ἐκτεθέρμανται πόθῳ 368). The imagery of θάλπος / θάλπειν can denote passion (e.g., Aesch. *PV* 649–50; Soph. *El.* 888): J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles: Commentaries* II: *The Trachiniae* (Leiden 1959) on 145; Segal (above, note 5) 110 and n. 37. Τήκω is similarly evocative of love's power: κάρτ' ἐντακείη τῷ φιλεῖν (*Trach.* 463). On the erotic connotations of heat and the sexual images of melting and liquefaction, see R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought*[2] (Cambridge 1954) 202–04; R. D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex: A Commentary on de R. N. IV 1030–1287* (Leiden 1987) 228–29 and 244–45. Heat can also suggest disease and destruction, as in Heracles' words of agony at the end of the play (ἔθαλψε μ' ἄτης σπασμός, 1082; also 1193–99 [literal meaning]). For a comic usage, see Ar. *Lys.* 1078–79 and 1084–85; J. Taillardat, *Les images d'Aristophane* (Paris 1965) *s. vv.*, and J. Henderson (ed.), *Aristophanes. Lysistrata* (Oxford 1987) ad loc.

[16] D. Wender, "The Will of the Beast: Sexual Imagery in the *Trachiniae*," *Ramus* 3 (1974) 7; Heiden (above, note 1) 43.

[17] Thus in Catullus' wedding song: *Ut flos in saeptis secretus nascitur hortis, / quem ... educat imber* (62. 39–41). Cf. J. Rudhardt, *Le thème de l'eau primordiale dans la mythologie grecque* (Bern 1971) *passim*; Motte (above, note 14) 214–25.

[18] Moisture is a traditional component of the union of sky and earth: e.g., Hom. *Il.* 14. 351 (στιλπναὶ ... ἔερσαι), Aesch. *Danaids*, *TrGF* III fr. 44. 3 Radt (ὄμβρος), Eur. *Chrysippus* fr. 839. 3 N[2] (ὑγροβόλους σταγόνας νοτίας), Lucretius 2. 992–93 (*liquentis / umoris guttas*), and Verg. *Geor.* 2. 325 (*pater omnipotens fecundis imbribus*). J. Herington, "The Marriage of Earth and Sky in Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1388–1392," in *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy* (Calgary 1986) 27–33 lists nine classical passages in which this immemorially old mythical mating is described.

[19] Cf. Sappho frr. 2. 10–11 L–P: αἱ δ' ἄηται / μέλλιχα πνέοισιν[and 47 L–P: ἔρως δ' ἐτίναξέ μοι φρένας, ὠς ἄνεμος κὰτ ὄρος ...; Ibycus *PMG* 286. 9–11 Page; Apoll. Rhod. 3. 970; Catullus 62. 41: [*flos*] *quem mulcent aurae*. Breezes are not uncommonly associated with sexual desire: Verg. *Geor.* 3. 274–75: *exceptantque leuis auras, et saepe sine ullis / coniugiis uento grauidae* (*mirabile dictu*), with R. Thomas' note ad loc. on the impregnating wind (*Virgil. Georgics* II: *Books III–IV* [Cambridge 1988]); Hor. *Carm.* 1. 25. 9–14 (where strong winds and the passion of love vainly assail the withered mistress). See also Onians (above, note 15) 53–56, 119–20. An additional illustration of the use of πνεύματα in an erotic context may occur in P. Köln V 58, lines 36–40 (= supplement to Archil. fr. 188 West). The most recent edition of the papyrus can be found in J. M. Bremer, A. M. van Erp Taalman Kip and S. R. Slings, *Some Recently Found Greek Poems: Text and Commentary*, *Mnemosyne* Suppl. 99 (Leiden 1987) 62–69 ("second Cologne epode").

[20] Kamerbeek (above, note 15) 59.

disease. A "universal force of desire, confusion and destruction," love means imbalance and sickness.[21] Indeed, the Hippocratic concept of disease is rooted in the belief in a close correlation between the μεταβολαί of the meteorological world and those affecting human bodies and souls.[22] Encompassing all aspects of the power of desire and destruction, love subjugates gods,[23] men and animals and elicits from them hopeless reactions of resistance or obedience.[24] Love is an external force human beings must constantly control, resist or obey, an obsessive desire driving them to the edge of madness.[25] At this point in the play, however, the demonic violence of Deianeira's jealousy has not been unleashed and her love for Heracles is best defined as the loyal and steadfast devotion of a wife to her husband.[26]

The meadow of maidenhood toward which Deianeira looks back thus ambiguously combines the security of virginal innocence with the promise of sexual readiness and marriage.[27] For Deianeira, however, the transition to

[21] Oudemans–Lardinois (above, note 4) 141 (interpretation of the third stasimon of *Antigone* in 140–44). Νόσος pervades the *Trachiniae* in its medical acceptation (784, 852, 981, 1013, 1084, 1115, 1120), in its conventional meaning as a metaphor for the "disease" of love (445, 491, 544), or both (1230). Cf. M. Pohlenz, *Die griechische Tragödie*[2] (Göttingen 1954) I 273 and II 114–15; W. S. Barrett, *Euripides. Hippolytos* (Oxford 1964) on 476–77; P. Biggs, "The Disease Theme in Sophocles' *Ajax*, *Philoctetes*, and *Trachiniae*," *CP* 61 (1966) 223–35; A. A. Long, *Language and Thought in Sophocles* (London 1968) 133–35; K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford 1974) 208, 211; Segal (above, note 5) 113–15 and *HSCP* 70 (1965) 138 n. 19 (image in Eur. *Hipp.*); R. Scodel, *Sophocles* (Boston 1984) 39.

[22] For the concomitant effects of heat, wind and water on human diseases, see, e.g., Hippocr. *Aër.* 26. 23, 27. 22 (ed. H. Diller) and F. Heinimann, *Nomos und Physis* (Basel 1945) 176–78, 183–86.

[23] Cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 451 ff., *Tro.* 948; Plato, *Symp.* 196d.

[24] Both neglect of and submission to love are destructive: The Danaids and Hippolytus are punished for neglecting erotic love and Deianeira's destruction is owed to her commitment to love. Cf. Seaford, *JHS* 107 (1987) 112–19; A. P. Burnett, "Hunt and Hearth in *Hippolytus*," in *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy* (Calgary 1986) 167–71.

[25] E.g., *Trach.* 441–42: "Whoever offers resistance to Eros like the fist fighter with his hands is insane," and Plato, *Resp.* 329c: Πῶς, ἔφη, ὦ Σοφόκλεις, ἔχεις πρὸς τάφροδίσια; ἔτι οἷός τε εἶ γυναικὶ συγγίγνεσθαι; καὶ ὅς, Εὐφήμει, ἔφη, ὦ ἄνθρωπε· ἀσμενέστατα μέντοι αὐτὸ ἀπέφυγον, ὥσπερ λυττῶντά τινα καὶ ἄγριον δεσπότην ἀποφυγών. Cf. Dover (above, note 21) 125–26 and 208–12.

[26] Depictions of Heracles with wife and children are assembled in J. Boardman, *LIMC* IV (1988) *s.v.* "Herakles" 834 (catalogue nos. 1674–83).

[27] As in Catullus 62. 39–41, a poem indebted to the wedding poetry of Sappho:

Ut flos in saeptis secretus nascitur hortis,
ignotus pecori, nullo conuolsus aratro,
quem mulcent aurae, firmat sol, educat imber.

R. Merkelbach, *Philologus* 101 (1957) 28 n. 2 and Davies (above, note 10) 401 follow Garrod's emendation *educat umbra* on the grounds that rain is traditionally absent in a *locus amoenus*. In light of the previous discussion of the topos, however, I follow recent editors in keeping the reading of the manuscripts: R. A. B. Mynors, *Catulli carmina* (OCT 1958; repr. 1976); C. J. Fordyce, *Catullus* (Oxford 1961); W. Eisenhut (Teubner 1983); and G. Lee, *The Poems of Catullus* (Oxford 1990).

married life has brought suffering, and she, therefore, confines her memories of the past to a world of chastity. Later, when she learns that Heracles is back and that she is soon to see him, she invokes Zeus with words that, again, suggest the protected—yet ambivalent—inner world of virginity (200): ὦ Ζεῦ, τὸν Οἴτης ἄτομον ὃς λειμῶν' ἔχεις.[28] The "intactness" of the uncut meadow of Oeta suggests virginity and, at the same time, creates a context where virginity could find its end. The meadow is par excellence the place where lovers meet, a place whose sanctity, isolation and luxuriance produce the setting and/or occasion for love: e.g., Sappho fr. 2. 9 L–P (λείμων), Ibycus *PMG* 286. 4 Page (κῆπος ἀκήρατος) and Eur. *Hipp.* 73–74 (ἐξ ἀκηράτου / λειμῶνος), the latter referring to the inviolate meadow of Artemis which Phaedra, in her erotic hallucination, transforms into a love meadow (208–11).[29] The optimism of Deianeira's call upon the lush meadow of Oeta, however, is ironically vitiated by the outcome of her future actions: The robe which she sends to Heracles on Oeta and intends to be the symbolic instrument of a second union with her spouse will not foster renewed love and life but, rather, breed fiery torment and death.[30]

Trachiniae 547–49 further illustrates Sophocles' treatment of traditional nature imagery. Now aware of Heracles' affair with Iole, Deianeira finds herself alienated from the world of love,[31] not because she is not yet ready for it (144–47) but because she is too old for it:

> ὁρῶ γὰρ ἥβην τὴν μὲν ἔρπουσαν πρόσω,
> τὴν δὲ φθίνουσαν· ὧν ἁφαρπάζειν φιλεῖ
> ὀφθαλμὸς ἄνθος, τῶν δ' ὑπεκτρέπει πόδα.[32]

[28] While stressing the utter alienation of lines 144–46 from their context, Dawe (above, note 7) 81 ponders: "Were the lines perhaps once part of a description of the ἄτομος λειμών of v. 200?"

[29] Motte (above, note 14) 121–46 and "Le pré sacré de Pan et des nymphes dans le *Phèdre* de Platon," *AC* 32 (1963) 466–69; Segal (above, note 21) 124–25; Bremer (above, note 11) 268–79; Stigers (above, note 11) 92–95.

[30] For the gradual evolution of the Oeta in the play, from peaceful to destructive, see Segal (above, note 5) 149–51 and *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, MA 1981) 84–85: "Zeus's meadow, though uncut, is the very antithesis of her sheltered meadow of virginity. Zeus and Oeta will bring her no joy ... The meadow fantasy thus reflects that imbalance between hope and reality, innocence and maturity ... Hence the meadow too, comes to reflect its opposites: shelter from heat turns into the full force of the heat of lust; protection from time in Olympian serenity becomes the total subjection to human transitoriness which Deianeira knows and fears."

[31] Deianeira seemingly never had a balanced love experience: Her earliest memories of her readiness for love are tied to fear (5–17) and threat of rape (557–65). C. S. Kraus, "Λόγος μέν ἐστ' ἀρχαῖος: Stories and Story-Telling in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*," *TAPA* 121 (1991) 87 notes that "the stasimon both brings Deianeira's marriage to a close and assimilates her to Iole (and vice-versa), both victims of bestial love."

[32] ὧν δ' (548) and τῶνδ' (549) Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (with Zippmann), while Dawe posits a lacuna in the middle of 549.

The human process is compared to the natural world,[33] and so is vulnerable to the laws of nature—subjection to time and the transformations that time ordains and operates being the most tangible and damaging such law. Linked to the past, nature is positive and blooming (144–47); tied to the present, it signifies age and heralds desolation (547–49), for the analogy between the human process and the natural world breaks down with the finite nature of human experience. Nature's ever-recurring cycle of birth, maturity and death describes a circular pattern which provides the mutability of human lives and affairs with partial explanation and inadequate comfort.[34] The flow of the individual human life is obstructed by mortality; singly, humankind has no immediate share in the benefits of a predictable and endless repetition of natural phenomena. Human self-perpetuation is collective only; no isolated human life can be repeated. The flower of youth does not bloom twice.

Deianeira speaks of herself with the words of a tired lover. Her words are those of the speaker in the "Cologne epode" of Archilochus (16–19):

Νεοβούλη[ν μὲν ὤν]
[ἄ]λλος ἀνὴρ ἐχέτω· αἰαῖ πέπειρα δὶς [τόση][35]
[ἄν]θος δ' ἀπερρύηκε παρθενήϊον
[κ]αὶ χάρις ἣ πρὶν ἐπῆν·

Deianeira's youth is fading (ἥβην ... φθίνουσαν = πέπειρα, ἀπερρύηκε) and no longer exerts any attraction (ὑπεκτρέπει = Νεοβούλη[ν ... ἄ]λλος ἐχέτω);[36] her rival, on the contrary, is still growing towards her full bloom (ἔρπουσαν πρόσω) and is most pleasing to behold (φιλεῖ echoes χάρις).[37] Both authors employ similar imagery to contrast younger and older women.[38]

[33] For a perceptive definition of the ancient Greek feeling of kinship with the natural world: Irwin (above, note 8) 147–50.

[34] Cf. van Gennep (above, note 6) 3: "Man's life resembles nature, from which neither the individual nor the society stands independent. The universe itself is governed by a periodicity which has repercussions on human life, with stages and transitions, movements forward, and periods of relative inactivity." For an analysis of the concept of time in *Trachiniae*, see de Romilly (above, note 2) 81–83; Segal (above, note 5) 106–08.

[35] A. Henrichs, "Riper than a Pear: Parian Invective in Theokritos," *ZPE* 39 (1980) 10–13 supports West's conjecture (*ZPE* 26 [1977] 48) on the relevance of the entry δὶς τόση in Hesychius δ 1978 Latte here.

[36] For other treatments of the same idea, see, e.g., Theocr. 7. 120–21 (καὶ δὴ μὰν ἀπίοιο πεπαίτερος, αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες / 'αἰαῖ,' φαντί, 'Φιλῖνε, τό τοι καλὸν ἄνθος ἀπορρεῖ') and *AP* 12. 39. 1–3.

[37] The bloom of youth is a conventional image in lyric poetry: cf. Stigers (above, note 11) 100 n. 15; Bremer et al. (above, note 19) 41–42, to which Mimn. frr. 1. 4 and 2. 3 West can be added (Kamerbeek [above, note 15], Longo [above, note 2]). Also common is the image of the flower of love: e.g., Pind. *Pyth.* 9. 37, 109–11; Aesch. *Ag.* 743; Eur. *Cycl.* 499; Heiden (above, note 1) 84.

[38] Deianeira's possible analogy with Neoboule rests upon her somewhat ambiguous attitude toward sexuality, an ambiguity suggested by the tension between her undeniable

The use of nature imagery, however, is more pervasive in Archilochus' poem than in Sophocles' tragedy. While the Cologne fragment presents the surrogate maiden as a καλὴ τέρεινα παρθένος (4) whose floral softness symbolizes innocence and vulnerability,[39] Sophocles introduces Iole by focusing on the ethical and social implications of the girl's demeanor.[40] Deianeira's candid portrayal of Iole stresses both the maiden's virginal appearance and her noble birth.[41] Iole withstands the situation in a manner which betrays her γενναιότης and, hence, her σωφροσύνη (313).[42] See 308–09:

ἄνανδρος, ἢ τεκνοῦσα;[43] πρὸς μὲν γὰρ φύσιν
πάντων ἄπειρος τῶνδε, γενναία δέ τις.

Later on, however, once aware of Iole's actual relationship with Heracles, Deianeira's feeling is greatly transformed (379):

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experience and her retrospective longing for virginity. A hint at the ambivalence of her sexuality possibly occurs in the Nessos episode (*Trach.* 555–74) where Deianeira, still a girl (παῖς 557) but already Heracles' wife (εὔνις 563), is almost raped by the centaur. P. Berol. 16140 (= Bacchyl. *dubia* fr. 64 Maehler = Pind. fr. 341 Bowra), a fragment of song in the style of Pindar and Bacchylides surely recounting Deianeira's encounter with Nessos, suggests the same ambiguity: νήϊδα ῥοδόπ[αχυν (10) and φίλον πόσιν ἱκ[ετευ (18), γυναικὸς φον[(20). A. P. Burnett, *The Art of Bacchylides* (Cambridge, MA 1985) 196 n. 27 cautions that the fragment may be the work of yet another poet, perhaps Simonides. C. Calame, *Les choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque* I (Rome 1977) 63 observes that although κόραι, παρθένοι, νεάνιδες, νύμφαι usually designate maidens and γυναῖκες married women, the semantic content of those terms could vary according to the context. Similarly, E. M. Craik, "Two Notes on Sophocles' *Trachiniai*, 257 and 750–62," *LCM* 9 (1984) 24–25 points out the ambivalent and changing status of Iole, simultaneously girl and woman.

[39] Cp. Aesch. *Suppl.* 998–99. For the implications of the nature symbolism in the presentation of Neoboule and of the maiden, see Henderson (above, note 11) 164–65; Stigers (above, note 11) 86–87 and 90–91.

[40] The concern for the social aspect of the relationship is already present in Archilochus (δοκέω δέ μιν / εἶδος ἄμωμον ἔχειν 4–5), where it is closely bound to the nature of invective poetry. E. Degani and G. Burzacchini, *Lirici greci* (Florence 1977) 10 understand ἄμωμος as *quae irrideri et uituperari nequit*, an interpretation confirmed by the fear of χάρμα emphasized later on in the epode (21–23). Cf. Hes. *Op.* 700–01; Semon. 7. 111–13 West.

[41] On φύσις in Sophocles: Heinimann (above, note 22) 95.

[42] Σωφροσύνη can imply chastity as well as soundness of mind (Eur. *Hipp.* 731 and 1100 contrast the two; cf. Segal [above, note 21] 139). On *sophrosyne* as the virtue of women in antiquity: H. North, *Sophrosyne* (Ithaca 1966) 131 n. 26 and *ICS* 2 (1977) 35–48.

[43] τεκνοῦσα (Brunck): τεκνοῦσα L^S rec. S: τεκοῦσα rec. LA. Brunck's emendation, which is based on an unattested contraction of τεκνόεις, -εσσα, -εν, is accepted by the most recent editors: Longo (above, note 2) 131 brings Callim. fr. 431 παιδοῦσσα in support of Brunck's suggestion; Easterling (above, note 5) ad loc. adds Eur. *Hipp.* 733 πτεροῦσσαν to the list of parallels; Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (above, note 7) ad loc.

ἡ κάρτα λαμπρὰ καὶ κατ' ὄμμα καὶ φύσιν.[44]

The captive is outstanding (λαμπρά) both because of her birth and of her good looks.[45] Although her appearance is not described in terms of nature symbolism, the diction is clearly tinged with the imagery of archaic epic and lyric poetry. In the *Iliad*, λαμπρός refers to the gleam of weapons (e.g., 13. 265, 16. 216) and the glare of the sun (e.g., 1. 605, 8. 485); it is also used in a simile where Achilles is likened to a star (22. 26–31) and in the description of Diomedes' starlike glittering arms (5. 5–6). The adjective thus conveys the idea of outstanding military might, a power supported by the gods and, at the same time, elevating the heroes to the rank of divine beings.

When Sappho borrows the star imagery and other images from Homer, refashions them and utilizes them in epithalamial poems, bride and groom become the unheroic warriors of the battle of love.[46] Historically and intellectually embedded in the transitional period between myth and the emergence of philosophy,[47] the poetry of Sappho, quite naturally, echoes the primitive understanding of the individual's life through the reenactment of myth at crucial moments of her (or his) existence.[48] The wedding day is one such instance: Custom demands that the couple be compared to gods.[49]

[44] Following the messenger's revelation that Eros was the guiding force in Heracles' sack of Oechalia (354–55) Deianeira at last "sees" Iole's seductive beauty: D. Seale, *Vision and Stagecraft in Sophocles* (Chicago 1982) 196–98; R. L. Kane, "The Structure of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*," *Phoenix* 42 (1988) 210; S. Durup, *Recherches sur "éros" dans la tragédie grecque* (the forthcoming monograph focuses on the physiological relationship between sight and erotic desire).

[45] Cf. W. Schadewaldt, "Experimentelle Philologie," *WS* 79 (1966) 77. Compare Eur. *El.* 36: λαμπροὶ γὰρ ἐς γένος γε, χρημάτων δὲ δὴ πένητες; Aeschin. *Fals. leg.* 51. 7–52. 1: ἐδόκει Κτησιφῶντι τὴν ὄψιν λαμπρὸς εἶναι. The adjective often also refers to the handsome vigor of youth (e.g., Eur. fr. 282. 10 N^2; Thuc. 6. 54. 2) and regularly implies social prominence and political clout (e.g., Soph. *El.* 685; Hdt. 6. 125. 1). On the multivalency of the word λαμπρός: F. Ellendt, *Lexicon Sophocleum* (Hildesheim 1958) *s.v.*; Seaford (above, note 6) 124 n. 182 (with further references).

[46] Particularly fr. 31 L–P, as convincingly argued by L. Rissman, *Love as War: Homeric Allusion in the Poetry of Sappho*, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 157 (Königstein 1983) 66–104.

[47] H. S. Schibli, *Pherekydes of Syros* (Oxford 1990) 67–68 aptly captures the modes and terms in which the transition is expressed and negotiated in the work of Pherekydes (floruit 544/1 BC, the first—according to Theopompus [ap. D.L. 1. 116]—to write about nature and gods): "In sum, in the marriage of Zas and Chthonie the divine world touches upon the human world. The institutions and customs of men are traced back to the gods. In Pherekydes' book, marriages are literally made in heaven as each marriage re-enacts the first divine marriage. In mythical thought, human acts are real because they repeat the deeds of the gods."

[48] Cf. R. Merkelbach, "Sappho und ihr Kreis," *Philologus* 101 (1957) 1–29; Calame (above, note 38) 367–69 and 400–03.

[49] The human institution of marriage is grounded in the world of the gods. The marriages of primeval deities such as Ouranos and Ge, Zas and Chthonie are archetypal for all subsequent unions among gods and men, and the concept of an original divine mating is

The light imagery which stands prominently in her love poems and wedding songs (frr. 16. 18, 58. 26, 96. 6–9 L–P) naturally constitutes a universal and central theme in allusions to and depictions of wedding ceremonies in contemporary and subsequent literature.[50] Given such conventional mental representations and literary precedents, therefore, it is likely that when Sophocles uses λαμπρά[51] he implies marriage.[52] He grants Iole a godlike nature and presents her as the prospective victorious warrior in the coming war for Heracles' love,[53] while he prepares Deianeira's withdrawal from it.[54]

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associated with Zeus and Hera in particular: Burnett (above, note 24) 176 n. 62; J. Rudhardt, *Le rôle d'Eros et d'Aphrodite dans les cosmogonies grecques* (Paris 1986) esp. 25–28 and 39–40; Seaford (above, note 6) 117 n. 17; Schibli (above, note 47) 61–69 with nn. 27–28. The sexual urge in nature and cosmos is a common theme in later wedding ceremony: Men. Rh. 401 and 408. 13–19 (nature creates marriage and unites heaven and earth), Himer. *Orat.* 9. 8 (god and nature play key roles in instituting marriage), and Procl. *in Tim.* 3. 176. 19–30 Diehl (ὃ δὴ [i.e. the union of earth and sky] καὶ οἱ θεσμοὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων εἰδότες προσέταττον οὐρανῷ καὶ γῇ προτελεῖν τοὺς γάμους). Cf. Seaford (above, note 6) 117 n. 117.

[50] Alcman *PMG* 1. 40–43 Page; Aristoph. *Pax* 859: τί δῆτ' ἐπειδὰν νυμφίον μ' ὁρᾶτε λαμπρὸν ὄντα; and *Av.* 1709–10 (mock-hymeneal passage in which Pisthetairos is said to outshine stars and sun rays); Eur. *IA* 74 (Paris is said to have come to Sparta χρυσῷ τε λαμπρός, both an allusion to his oriental princely glitter and an ironical reference to his being groom-to-be: ἐρῶν ἐρᾶσαν [75] ... λαβών [76], following the tendency to describe adulterous union in terms of marriage ritual [Seaford (above, note 6) 123 n. 174]); Theocr. 16. 26–28; Ap. Rh. 1. 774–81 (Jason compared to the Evening Star, the star of marriage and fertility) and 3. 956–59 (Jason/Sirius steals Medea's heart and mind) with R. L. Hunter, *Apollonius of Rhodes. Argonautica, Book III* (Cambridge 1989) ad loc.; Catullus 61. 21–22, 192–93. Light imagery is commonly applied to the gleaming beauty of the gods as well as to the power and energy which emanate from them (e.g., Apollo is Φοῖβος in Hom. *Il.* 1. 43, Soph. *OT* 71, Eur. *Ion* 140 and Τειτάν in *Orphic H.* 34. 3). Marriage itself is associated with brilliance in Philoxenus Cytherius *PMG* 828 Page: Γάμε θεῶν λαμπρότατε. W. E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* III (Oxford 1853) 482 argues that the celebrated goldenness of the gods "always belongs to light rather than color." While brightness might radiate from the whole body (*Hom. H. Demeter* 188–89 with N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* [Oxford 1974] ad loc.), radiance about the head is the traditional manifestation of divine power (Onians [above, note 15] 165–66). The radiate head naturally plays a key rôle in Hellenistic iconography and political propaganda: M. Parca, *Ptocheia or Odysseus in Disguise at Troy* (*P. Köln VI 245*), ASP 31 (Atlanta 1990) 41–44.

[51] One might also recognize a topical dimension to λαμπρά since it echoes the parodos of the play (94–140) where Heracles and Deianeira are characterized through the opposing concepts of light and darkness (cf. T. F. Hoey, "Sun Symbolism in the Parodos of the *Trachiniae*," *Arethusa* 5 [1972] 133–54). Thus, by a tragic irony, Deianeira applies Heracles' active qualities to the maiden and makes her stand by him in an harmonious relationship from which she is alienated. Segal (above, note 5) 116 relates the adjective to the fire imagery latent in the first part of the play.

[52] In 205–07 the chorus sing of a marriage about to be celebrated; in 379 Deianeira praises Iole for her beauty (a traditional element in wedding ceremony); and subsequently Iole is referred to as the bride of Heracles (536, 546, 843, 857, 894; cf. Eur. *Hipp.* 544–45); Seaford (above, note 6) 128–29 and (above, note 7) 50–54.

[53] In Sappho fr. 16. 18 L–P Anactoria's beloved face is ἀμάρυγμα λάμπρον (G. Lanata, *QUCC* 2 [1966] 76–77), and Segal (above, note 5) 116 notes that in *Trachiniae*

Iole's characterization combines heroic grandeur with lyric sensitivity and bears witness to Sophocles' adaptation of epic and lyric precedents to his literary genre and dramatic goal. Lines 539–40 reveal a similar blend of allusion and assimilation:

καὶ νῦν δύ' οὖσαι μίμνομεν μιᾶς ὑπὸ
χλαίνης ὑπαγκάλισμα.

Μία χλαῖνα is the symbol for a pair of lovers[55] and its vivid contrast with δύ' οὖσαι suggestively sums up the situation: "So now the two of us lie under the one sheet waiting for his embrace."[56] The seduction narrated in the Cologne epode provides a larger literary frame for the image (29–30):

μαλθακῆι δέ μιν
[χλαί]νηι καλύψας, αὐχέν' ἀγκάλη<ι>ς' ἔχων.

The parallel becomes instructive when one recalls that Archilochus' poem is itself modelled on the *Dios Apatè* of *Iliad* 14, as it presents the reenactment by human beings of the sacred nuptials of Zeus and Hera.[57] Unless the community of diction and thought shared by the three episodes (χλαίνης *Trach.* 540, [χλαί]νηι P. Köln V 58. 30, νεφέλην ἔσσαντο *Iliad* 14. 350; ὑπαγκάλισμα *Trach.* 540, ἀγκάλη<ι>ς' P. Köln V 58. 30,

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"the word (λαμπρά) has erotic connotations too, suggesting the luminosity of the love object, and hence forms part of the constellation of themes linking the fire-imagery of lust to the destructive fires of the action itself." Thuc. 6. 54. 1–2 (τὸ γὰρ 'Αριστογείτονος καὶ 'Αρμοδίου τόλμημα δι' ἐρωτικὴν ξυντυχίαν ἐπεχειρήθη ... γενομένου δὲ 'Αρμοδίου ὥρα ἡλικίας λαμπροῦ 'Αριστογείτων ἀνὴρ τῶν ἀστῶν, μέσος πολίτης, ἐραστὴς ὢν εἶχεν αὐτόν) provides a possible indication that the adjective λαμπρός bears erotic overtones.

[54] Webster (above, note 1) 169 pointedly notes that Iole and Deianeira are not engaged in a conflict but rather embody two poles of the same reality, and P. E. Easterling, "Character in Sophocles," *G&R* 24 (1977) 122 observes that both women are linked as victims of love.

[55] Kamerbeek (above, note 15) 127; Long (above, note 21) 119; Longo (above, note 2) 198–99; Degani–Burzacchini (above, note 40) 20; B. Gentili, *QUCC* 21 (1976) 17–18; G. Arrigoni, "Amore sotto il manto e iniziazione nuziale," *QUCC* 44 (1983) 12–18; Davies (above, note 3) 152; G. Koch-Harnack, *Erotische Symbole: Lotos-blüte und gemeinsamer Mantel auf antiken Vasen* (Berlin 1989) 136–38. Cf. Eur. *Peliades* fr. 603. 4 N^2: ὅταν δ' ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς χλαῖναν εὐγενοῦς πέσῃς; Theocr. 16. 19: Ζανός τοι θυγάτηρ ὑπὸ τὰν μίαν ἴκετο χλαῖναν; Ovid *Am.* 1. 4. 47–48: *saepe mihi dominaeque meae properata uoluptas / ueste sub iniecta dulce peregit opus*; Prop. 1. 4. 14.

[56] Arrigoni (previous note) 17 observes that the cloak could also serve as cover for the κλίνη of the symposium or for the bridal couch, and interprets Deianeira's last actions ("casting sheets [φάρη] and spreading them upon the bed of Heracles," 915–16) before her suicide as the symbolic reenactment of her union with Heracles. "Indubbiamente il comportamento della Deianira sofoclea, dope la morte di Eracle ... dimostra che l'identità sessuale della sposa greca nasce e finisce nel talamo, sul letto nuziale, dove gli στρωτὰ ... φάρη di Eracle, come precedentemente la *chlaina* indivisibile con le altre, raccolgono un altro viaggio verso l'abbandono" (51).

[57] On human marriages as replicas of that of Zeus and Hera: Bremer (above, note 11) 272–73; Redfield (above, note 6) esp. 188; Burnett (above, note 24) 178 n. 72.

ἀγκάς *Iliad* 14. 346) is merely coincidental, the similarity suggests that Sophocles may allude to the Homeric model and to the adaptation of that model by Archilochus. If so, *Trachiniae* 539–40 ironically perverts both the Homeric archetype and its lyric adaptation. Modelling the account of his experience on the tale of Zeus enshrouding himself and Hera in a golden cloud, Archilochus makes the speaker cover the girl with his cloak, thereby adapting the epic and mythical exemplum to the particular circumstances of his existence and recasting the god's gesture in familiar terms and human dimensions.[58] In Sophocles, however, the dramatic action invalidates the exemplary relevance of the mythical deed to lovemaking and marital harmony among mortals. The primeval divine union with which Archilochus assimilated his own erotic experience and through which he gave a literary expression to the universal aspects of human amatory encounters is now adapted to a *mariage à trois* in which two women are waiting for the man's attentions under a single cloak.[59] Spread over both his wife and his new lover the cloak of Heracles thus turns into a monstrous parody of the cover which traditionally effected the lovers' seclusion and constituted the emblem of their indivisible intimacy.[60]

These passages illustrate Sophocles' adaptation of conventional images, epic and lyric, to the psychological characterization of the female protagonist. All depict Deianeira as a passive character either too young or too old to share in the potential erotic environment which surrounds her.[61] Two other episodes, however, contradict this perception by portraying

[58] Intrinsically, of course, the mythical tales themselves reflect social and human realities. Zeus' cloud refers to the cloak with which the lover covered his girl in the actual lovemaking encounters which took place in the open. On the rôle of the nuptial cloak of the husband in the sexual initiation and matrimonial transition of the bride: Arrigoni (above, note 55) 48–56, and B. M. Fridh-Haneson, *Le manteau symbolique. Etude sur les couples en terre cuite assis sous un même manteau* (Stockholm 1983) 75–77 (with a note on Pherecydes fr. 7 B 2 Diels, in which Zas makes a robe which he presents to Chthonie as he declares her his wife, on which now see Schibli [above, note 47] 50–69).

[59] Koch-Harnack (above, note 55) 163–65.

[60] The shared blanket also recurs in the context of homosexual love: e.g., Lysias 14. 25; Plato *Symp.* 219b–c; *AP* 5. 169. 3–4. Cf. K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, updated and with a new postscript (Cambridge, MA 1989) 98 (with reference to a sixth-century BC Attic black-figure pyxis now in Bologna, Museo Civico inv. coll. Palagi 1434 = *CVA* Italy 7, plate [III He] 44.3) and 158; Koch-Harnack (above, note 55) 138–48.

[61] These select passages, however, do not detract from the fact that once she has resolved to act, Deianeira does so out of passionate love, under the guidance of powerful and destructive erotic urges: H. Parry, "Aphrodite and the Furies in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*," in *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy* (Calgary 1986) 109 n. 30 (with bibliography). Also, the Aetolian mythological tradition underlines Deianeira's Amazonian nature, physical strength and harsh character: Bacchyl. 5. 165–68; Apollod. 1. 8. 1; Σ Ap. Rh. 1. 1212; Nonnos 35. 89–91. The pre-Sophoclean character was bold-hearted and perhaps even deliberately malicious: Th. Zielinski, "Exkurse zu den Trachinierinnen," *Philologus* 55 (1896) 583–85; I. Errandonea, "Deianeira vere Δηι-άνειρα," *Mnemosyne* 55 (1927) 147–48; F. Stoessl, *Der Tod des Herakles* (Zurich 1945) 29–31; March (above, note 1) 51–57.

Deianeira as a young woman instinctively—though only partially—aware of the emotional and physical demands placed upon her by the foreseeable transition from virginity to womanhood.[62]

Deianeira's memories of her fear of suitors and of Acheloos' courtship suggest the setting which generally accompanies evocations of divine marriages (9, 13–14):

μνηστὴρ γὰρ ἦν μοι ποταμός, Ἀχελῷον λέγω,

ἐκ δὲ δασκίου γενειάδος
κρουνοὶ διερραίνοντο κρηναίου ποτοῦ.

Acheloos' physical appearance combines the two elements inherent in most divine unions: water and vegetation.[63] The words ποταμός, κρουνοί and κρηναίου ποτοῦ constitute an obvious reference to the first component of a setting fit for the human reenactment of the divine ἱερὸς γάμος,[64] and an allusion to vegetation emerges from δασκίου when the adjective is granted an extended, metaphorical meaning. Such is suggested by an entry in Hesychius: δάσκιον· μεγάλως σκιάζον διὰ τὸ σύνδενδρον καὶ δασύ (δ 286 Latte).[65] The clump of Acheloos' beard thus hints at dense bushes and shade, and elicits the image of a setting often associated with lovemaking. Acheloos was a well-known amorist in antiquity,[66] and the associative nexus which Sophocles creates between the monster's beard, water and vegetal growth probably reflects the belief in the association of the jaw—and hence of the beard—with procreation.[67]

[62] On the way stories are used by Deianeira and other characters in the play to organize their experience, see Kraus (above, note 31) 79–88 ("marriage stories") and 88–95 ("poison stories").

[63] See Motte (above, note 14) 208–09.

[64] "Rivers were regarded as generative powers and rivers of seed": Onians (above, note 15) 230, who refers to the custom in various parts of the Greek world for bridegroom and bride to bathe in river water. Also Martina (above, note 1) 64 n. 47: "È stata sottolineata la presenza dell'elemento acqua e il significato che essa assume nell'ambito sessuale, anche nelle forme in cui l'Acheloo si manifesta."

[65] Ordinarily, the adjective δάσκιος qualifies ὕλη and ὄρος (Longo [above, note 2] 29). G. Schiassi, *Sofocle. Le Trachinie* (Florence 1953) ad loc. observes, "δάσκιος dà l'idea della boscaglia ombreggiante le rive del fiume," and Segal (above, note 5) 105 remarks, "the fine lines which describe the water pouring down the forest-like tangle of his beard ... make clear at once that we have to do with a figure who is not yet fully differentiated from the forces of nature." On the "fairy-tale uncouthness" of this and the Nessos episodes: K. Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, transl. by H. and D. Harvey (New York 1979) 37; Martina (above, note 1) 64 and 72–73.

[66] Cf. Heiden (above, note 1) 24–27; W. M. Clarke, "Achelous in Anthologia Palatina 12. 51 (Callimachus)," *CP* 76 (1981) 297–300 (esp. 299) and, generally, H. P. Isler, *Acheloos* (Bern 1970). For representations of Acheloos in art: H. P. Isler, *LIMC* I (1981) *s.v.* "Acheloos" 12–36 (catalogue nos. 213–67 survey the depictions of the fight between Heracles and the river god).

[67] Onians (above, note 15) 232–33.

Deianeira's second threatening erotic encounter with a hybrid creature occurred soon after her marriage to Heracles. She was being ferried across the Evenos river by Nessos when, in mid-stream,[68] the wanton centaur attempted to rape her (557–65):[69]

ὃ παῖς ἔτ' οὖσα τοῦ δασυστέρνου παρὰ
Νέσσου φθίνοντος ἐκ φονῶν ἀνειλόμην,
ὃς τὸν βαθύρρουν ποταμὸν Εὔηνον βροτοὺς
μισθοῦ 'πόρευε χερσίν, οὔτε πομπίμοις
κώπαις ἐρέσσων οὔτε λαίφεσιν νεώς.
ὃς κἀμέ, τὸν πατρῷον ἡνίκα στόλον
ξὺν Ἡρακλεῖ τὸ πρῶτον εὖνις ἐπόμην,
φέρων ἐπ' ὤμοις, ἡνίκ' ἦν μέσῳ πόρῳ,
ψαύει ματαίαις χερσίν·

Combined with the particular setting of the episode, in or near a river (βαθύρρουν ποταμόν 559),[70] the promise of shady vegetation (δασυστέρνου 557) conveyed in the description of the physical aspect of the centaur is erotically suggestive.[71] The natural liquid environment and the metaphorical shade and lush growth of Nessos' chest intimate a setting suitable for a lovemaking scene.[72] Centaurs in effect were renowned for their arrogant licentiousness[73] and the verb ψαύει in line 565 bespeaks the nature of

[68] Some ancient critics faulted this scenario for its inherent absurdity: "Others charge that Sophocles has introduced the shooting of the arrow too soon, while they were still crossing the river, for in those circumstances, they claim, Deianeira too would have perished, since the dying Centaur would have dropped her in the river" (Dio of Prusa 60. 1, transl. H. L. Crosby [Loeb]). On Sophocles' innovation: March (above, note 1) 65.

[69] The various literary treatments of the Nessos tale (Archil. frr. 286, 288 West; Hes. *Cat.* fr. 25. 18–33 M–W; Bacchyl. 16; Apollod. *Bibl.* 2. 7. 6; Diod. 4. 36. 3) are surveyed and discussed in Ch. Dugas, "La mort du centaure Nessos," *REA* 45 (1943) 18–24; Easterling (above, note 5) 15–19; Burnett (above, note 38) 196; March (above, note 1) 52–58, 62–65; Heiden (above, note 1) 86.

[70] On the centaurs' association with wilderness and torrents: G. Dumézil, *Le problème des Centaures*, Annales du Musée Guimet 4 (Paris 1929) 170–71. B. Dietrich (*Hermes* 90 [1962] 135) notes that the horse, through its association with fountains and rivers, has affinities with deities of vegetation and nature.

[71] Centaurs are traditionally hairy (e.g., Hom. *Il.* 2. 743; *Hom. H. Hermes* 224), and Longo (above, note 2) 204 cites Hes. *Op.* 514 as the first occurrence of δασύστερνος in reference to animals τῶν καὶ λάχνη δέρμα κατάσκιον. On the popular belief that growth of hair is associated with sexual vigor: Onians (above, note 15) 232–33.

[72] D. Gerber, "An Epithet in Bacchylides' Dithyramb 16," *LCM* 14 (1989) 102–03 stresses the erotic overtones of the epithet ῥοδόεις applied to Nessus' river in Bacchyl. 16. 34 as well as the dramatically significant symbolism of the adjective: "The roses on the banks of the Lycormas are an appropriate setting for Nessus' attempted rape." On the question of whether Bacchylides is indebted to Sophocles, see Easterling (above, note 5) 16; Burnett (above, note 38) 196 n. 27; March (above, note 1) 62–63 (with bibliography); Davies (above, note 3) xxxii. On the date of *Trachiniae*: Kraus (above, note 31) 75.

[73] Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 2. 41–48; Soph. *Trach.* 1096 (ὑβριστήν, ἄνομον, ὑπέροχον βίαν); Eur. *HF* 181 (τετρασκελές θ' ὕβρισμα). Dumézil (above, note 70) 176–77; J.

Nessos' intentions.[74] The attack on Deianeira however fails as the centaur succumbs under Heracles' arrow-shot, and the beast employs his last gasps to devise the death of his murderer. It is with the love-charm which the lustful creature concocts from a mixture of his blood and of the Hydra's poison[75] that Deianeira will irrevocably "cure" her husband's relentless lust.[76]

Acheloos and Nessos belong to an elemental world of unrestrained sexual drive and physical violence and partake of an era in which the distinction between human and bestial realms is blurred. The multiformous river and the horse-man are forces of nature closely connected with meadows or, more precisely, creators of meadows.[77] In *Trachiniae*, they intrude in the human sphere at the moment when the female protagonist experiences the critical transition from maidenhood to marriage. The tension between the threat of their instinctive lust and the emotional and physical vulnerability of her coming of age is logically conveyed through metaphors drawn from the natural world. The following tabulation—fashioned after that which concludes J. M. Bremer's discussion of Sappho fr. 2 L–P and Ibycus *PMG* 286 as inescapable predecessors for the imagery of Euripides *Hippolytus* 73–78 ([above, note 11] 271)—seems to corroborate this interpretation:

Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*[2] (New York 1991) 133; P. du Bois, "On Horse/men, Amazons, and Endogamy," *Arethusa* 12 (1979) 37–38.

[74] The verb ψαύω carries erotic connotations: e.g., P. Köln V 58. 32: μαστ[ῶν τε χερσὶν ἡπίως ἐφηψάμην; Pind. *Ol.* 6. 35; Eur. *Archelaos* fr. 2 A line 4 (ed. M. A. Harder [Leiden 1985] 191–92); Σ Eur. *Hipp.* 14 (ὡς ἐν διηγήσει λέγει ἢ ὡς πρὸς κνημονὴν αὐτῆς ἐκείνου τοῦτο ποιοῦντος). See Davies (above, note 3) on line 565 for additional parallels, and Jebb on *Antigone* 172 (on the verb's association with the notion of polluting profanation).

[75] Thus also in Ovid *Met.* 9. 129–33. Perhaps echoing a primitive version of the myth, the late sources (Diodorus 4. 36. 5 and Apollod. 2. 7. 6) list the centaur's sperm among the ingredients of the philter, a detail which Sophocles may have omitted as inappropriate for the dignity of tragedy (Dugas [above, note 69] 22–24). On the beguiling quality of Nessos' persuasive words on Deianeira: e.g., A. Roselli, "Livelli del conoscere nelle *Trachinie* di Sofocle," *Materiali e discussioni per l'annalisi dei testi classici* 7 (1982) 29 and Stinton (above, note 7) 424–26; Heiden (above, note 1) 87–90.

[76] On sexual love, both Deianeira's and Heracles', as the actual mover of the play see, e.g., P. du Bois (above, note 73) 41; P. Holt, "Disease, Desire, and Deianeira: A Note on the Symbolism of the *Trachiniae*," *Helios* 8 (1981) 63–73; Seale (above, note 44) 196–98; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Sophocles and Women," in *Sophocle*, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 29 (Vandœuvres 1983) 239–40; Scodel (above, note 21) 38–39.

[77] Segal (above, note 5) 106 similarly links the two: "Nessus is 'shaggy-chested,' *dasusternos* (557), and his river is 'deep-flowing,' *bathurrous* (559), a detail which relates to the wild realm and the shaggy beard of Achelous in the opening scene (13–14)."

	Trach. 5–14	*Trach.* 557–65
springtime (of life)	πατρὸς μὲν ἐν δόμοιςιν Οἰνέως / ναίουσ' ἔτ' (6–7)	παῖς ἔτ' οὖσα (557)
meadows–bushes	δασκίου (13)	δασυστέρνου (557)
flowers	———	———
inviolate spot	———	———
irrigation	κρουνοὶ διερραίνοντο κρηναίου ποτοῦ (14)	μέςῳ πόρῳ (564)
rivers	ποταμός (9)	ποταμὸν Εὔηνον (559)
erotic urge	(μνηστήρ 9)	(Cypris 497–530 and 860–61)

Differences between the *Trachiniae* and the other passages exist. The three texts examined by J. M. Bremer emphasize the presence of flowers and the fact that the spot is untrodden, and they depict the *locus amoenus* as a natural love nest in whose seclusion erotic love can potentially be pursued. In Sophocles' play, by contrast, there are no flowers and the natural setting favorable to an erotic adventure is partly created by the males' bodies, through highly elaborate metaphors.

Trachiniae 13–14 and 557–65, because they bear the imprint of the conventions of the nature symbolism diction, help complete and shade Deianeira's character. While the analogies she draws between herself and the natural world at different moments of her life first implant the idea that she is not an active erotic being (144–47 and 547–49), the Acheloos and Nessos episodes modify this impression and show that, within the limits of her personality, Deianeira acknowledges an awareness of her erotic potential: Bound to the past, her active sensuality belongs to the past as well.[78] Her psychological characterization reflects the tensions in the play, the clashes between youth and age, love and deception, birth and death, light and obscurity.

Is it valid to assume that the conventional images of love poetry motivate the metaphorical associations outlined in the *Trachiniae*? Can they be taken to be familiar to the public of tragedy to a degree that Sophocles might manipulate them freely as if they were common conventions? Only a global study of the ways tragic poets adapt archetypal, natural metaphors to the dramatic treatment of erotic and other major liminal experiences can provide an answer. In the meantime, we are left with possible links. From

[78] "The encounters with Achelous and Nessus ... remind us that the power of female sexuality ... still lives in Deianeira" (Segal [above, note 30] 79).

the Homeric hymns to Nonnus, the meadow metaphor is the standard accompaniment of accounts of divine and mortal unions.[79] A feature of the poetry of Archilochus, Sappho, Anacreon (*PMG* 346 frr. 1. 7–9 and 417. 5 Page), Pindar (*Pyth.* 9. 37, 109–10), Bacchylides (*Dithyr.* 16. 34) and Euripides (*Cycl.* 499; *Hipp.* 73–78, 208–11), such imagery also pervades Hellenistic poetry. This permanence suggests that instead of being "skipped" by the tragedians, the conventional *topoi* of love poetry lived on in their works, but encoded in words and applied in ways that satisfied the demands of an altered subjectivity, of a different literary genre, of changing cultural views, and of new philosophical questions. J. M. Bremer's suggestion that Phaedra's "sensual words about the meadow [*Hipp.* 208–11] will have been understood easily by an audience which was accustomed to poetry in which erotic activities took place on lush meadows" ([above, note 11] 278) are particularly apt and invite further investigation.

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[79] Motte (above, note 14) 208–12.